



**TENNESSEE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
CENTRAL OFFICE
CORNERSTONE SQUARE BUILDING, SUITE 305
530 CHURCH STREET
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37243-0745
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REVISED March 26, 2004 Board Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present:

Chairman Wiggins
Commissioner Pride
Commissioner Jones
Commissioner Lewis
Commissioner Kyles
Commissioner Rodriguez
Commissioner Hammonds
Commissioner King
Commissioner Todd
Commissioner Rogers (via Phone)
Commissioner Horne (via Phone)
Commissioner Hakeem
Commissioner Smith

Commissioners Absent:

Commissioner Garrett
Commissioner Hodge

Staff Present:

Amber D. Gooding, Executive Director
Sherree Hall, Deputy Director
Scott Mayer, General Counsel
Shay Rose, Assistant Counsel
Robert Bright, Housing Coordinator
Cynthia Howard, Communications Officer
Lisa Lancaster, Director's Assistant
Patricia Collier, Legal Assistant
Frank Guzman, Intake Officer/Investigator

Guests:

Rochelle Robinson
Matt Workman
Rick Dunlap

I. Call to Order

Chairman Wiggins called the meeting to order at 10:00 am. Roll call was taken and guests were introduced. Commissioner Samuel Kyles offered the invocation.

II. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes of the January 2004 were reviewed and Commissioner King made a motion to accept which Commissioner Hakeem seconded. A vote was taken and passed.

III. Announcements

Executive Director Amber Gooding introduced new staff members, Patricia Collier, Legal Assistant and Frank Guzman, Intake Officer/Investigator. The board welcomed both.

IV. Old Business

There was no old business to discuss.

V. New Business

Housing Coordinator, Robert Bright, from the Knoxville Office presented the Housing portion of a Trend report detailing discrimination charges filed Statewide and Nationwide over the past 5 years. The board requested more detailed information to include trends and statistical data requested the report.

Deputy Director, Sherree Hall provided information for the Employment cases that appear on the aforementioned Trend report. Printed copies were distributed to all in attendance. (Attached)

In response to several questions from Commissioner's requesting information referencing the daily operating procedures of the Commission, Director Gooding suggested that a time be scheduled for the Commissioner's to visit the THRC office and be walked through the process. It was noted that the time would be utilized as a Commissioner orientation activity and available to any Commissioner wishing to attend. (Date and time to be announced.)

VI. Budget Report

Director Gooding announced that the Governor's approved budget for the department for the coming fiscal year did not include the 5% reductions he requested the agency prepare in January. The Knoxville Regional Office will be adding a Housing Investigator to its staff due to the reduction not being taken.

The Director has talked briefly to Rep. Lois Deberry and will be meeting with several other Legislators in an effort to discuss drafting legislation to address the use of Subpoena powers by the Agency to gather information from respondents concerning discrimination complaints filed by citizens.

Director Gooding reported that the newly implemented system of Regionalized tracking of case closures seems to be working well and will continue to be monitored.

VII. Executive Director's Report

Director Gooding suggested that a group picture be made of the Board of Commissioner's. Details will be announced at the May 21, 2004 meeting.

Chairman Wiggins requested an update on the possible move of the Central Office from its present location. Director Gooding reported that the agency is working with F & A to

address specific problems with the building and noted that Board members could assist by talking to any legislators to request a location change.

VIII. Legal Updates

Scott Mayer, General Counsel reported on a religious discrimination case in East Tennessee and an age discrimination case filed in a rural county.

A report was given on a housing case, which Chairman Wiggins filed against a landlord who discriminated against people because of their race. Another case relating to people with disabilities, which relates to Public accommodations and a local builder is currently being investigated.

The mediation process was discussed at the request of Director Gooding. Tennessee law states that this agency must bring all parties together in an effort to successfully mediate cause cases. Hearings could be held in the future with Commissioner's serving as examiners. This process is being actively examined.

The Rule Making change, which stated that complainants were no longer required to notarize complaints approved by the Commission, will go into effect on March 29, 2004.

The Tennessee Handicap Act does not define how many employees are required to allow a person to file a complaint. The Law Committee has reviewed the issue. The Director requested that the memo sent to the Law Committee be sent to all Commissioners' for review.

The Commission went into closed session at this time to discuss, with counsel, pending litigation against the Commission.

Executive Director Amber Gooding asked the newly appointed Commissioner's who were present to introduce themselves to the Board. In attendance were Commissioner Gregory Lewis, Commissioner Samuel Kyles and Commissioner Robert Earl Jones. All new Commissioner's were welcomed by the Board.

With no further business to attend to, Chairman Wiggins called for the board meeting to be adjourned. The meeting was closed at 12:04 pm.